



Church of the Holy Family
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Message for Pentecost Sunday, Year A, 2020

Dear Parishioners of the Church of the Holy Family

Annually, the Easter Season is concluded with the celebration of the Solemnity of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Though, we can only celebrate it in private within the confines of our own homes and our hearts just like other key events of this Easter Season, it has been quite an experience of what we have seen and heard; and to long for what was supposed to happen but did not take place.

In the Middle Ages, God has inspired some pious persons to invent the Rosary, through which it was attached among others the Glorious Mysteries, the first 3 of which are the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Pentecost, key markers of the Easter Season. God foresees that there will be situations when we cannot celebrate the Sundays of the Easter Season and indeed every Sunday (Day of Resurrection) in the way that we are used to but we can commemorate it privately through the recitation of the Rosary meditating on Glorious Mysteries either individually or in our families.

The situations mentioned in the forgoing paragraph include on one hand, individuals who are indisposed or hospitalized due any illness; massive numbers isolated due to an epidemic such as the Bubonic Plague, Spanish Flu, Asian Flu, SARS, MERS, Ebola and on the other hand where both huge groups of individuals have to be hospitalized and at the same time entire communities have to be confined eg. the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Now, as mentioned in the 1st Reading (Acts 2:1-11), while the disciples were at prayer with Mary, they experienced the fire and strength of the Holy Spirit descending on their heads and then into their hearts and lives. This fulfills yet again Jesus' promises pronounced on the very first Easter Sunday, *the first day of the Season Easter*, recorded in the Gospel text, Jn 20:19-23: 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. God's deepest life came upon them giving them empowerment and courage, inspiring them to go forth and testify in Christ's name to all peoples.

We need the wisdom and the insight of the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds so that we can understand what others are saying to us and they may understand us. In the process, with the Spirit's help, we will discover a new wisdom, peace, tolerance, compassion, and humility and through all of this, we will achieve a deeper understanding of others.

The tradition of the Church gives us two beautiful Gregorian chants that we use at Pentecost in honor of the Holy Spirit. They are *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come, Holy Spirit) and *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come, Creator Spirit).

The former is enshrined in the Sequence before the Gospel at Mass on Pentecost Sunday and is composed by Stephen Langdon (d. 1228), Archbishop of Canterbury. The 1st and 2nd stanza invite the Holy Spirit to descend on us; the 3rd and 4th describe its strength to be given to us; the 5th and 6th speak of its light and goodness; the 7th and 8th beg for healing, renewal of strength, pouring of dew on our dryness, washing away our guilt, bending of the stubborn heart and will, melting the frozen, warming the chill and guiding the steps of those that go astray; while the 9th and 10th request for grace and eternal joy.

The latter is chanted as an opening hymn whenever the Divine Office is prayed at Pentecost and was composed by Rabanus Maurus (d. 856). Besides, it is also chanted during the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation; the Sacrament of Holy Orders; Dedication of a Church; and other occasions when the Holy Spirit is invoked. The 1st stanza highlights its part in creation; the 2nd its role in sanctifying us; the 3rd mentions its seven gifts; the 4th requests for its strength; the 5th begs for its help; the 6th intercedes it to deepen our relationship with God and the 7th is a doxology in honor of the Trinity.

Through the ages, the Holy Spirit has inspired many to rise above their struggles, challenges and difficulties while remaining faithful to the Truth as exemplified by the saints whose feast days we remember this week. Today is feast day of Blessed Nicholas Barre, the founder of the Ij Sisters. Also, today we commemorate the Visitation of BVM while tomorrow we honor the BVM, the Mother of the Church and it is also the feast day of St Justin. 2nd Jun is the feast day of Sts Marcellinus and Peter, 3rd Jun is the feast day of St Charles Lwanga and Companions. 4th Jun is the feast day of St Quirinius of Sisak, Croatia, 5th June is the feast day of St Boniface and 6th Jun is feast day of St Norbert and St Marcellinus Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers.

Let us invoke the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 103) today and everyday saying, 'Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth'. Alleluia !

Fr Stanislaus PANG